

Name: Jacqueline (not real name)

In 1994, I was 22 years old. I lived with my father and three brothers and sisters; our mother had died before the genocide.

Our problems started in 1973. Our houses were burnt and we were obliged to live in the bushes for some days. In 1990, the same problems repeated, but this time, they said that it was because the *Inkotanyi*¹ were in the country and all the Tutsi were thought to be their spies.

In our classrooms, the teachers used to make the Tutsi stand up and they counted them. When we were doing some work at school, the Hutu had the assignment to clean the classroom whereas the Tutsi were obliged to cultivate in the coffee plantations.

Because of being Tutsi, I did not have the chance to continue my studies and went to be a housemaid. In the night of the 6th of April 1994, my boss told me that president Habyarimana had died in a plane crash and that she and her family were leaving early in the morning to Burundi. She told me that I would stay with the other housemaids and that they would come back later for their possessions and me. I went with them to a hotel and stayed there.

The *Interahamwe*² came a few days later and killed many of the Tutsi who were at that hotel. I went to another city and on my way, I met the brother of one of my friends, a Hutu, and he told me that all those buses were bringing the Tutsi to their death. He ordered me to jump in his truck and a few miles away, some (other) *Interahamwe* saw me and ordered me to get off that truck. They beat me and the Hutu

¹ *Inkotanyi*: Kinyarwanda term (local language of Rwanda) used to refer to Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF. Hutu extremists often used this term to refer to alleged Tutsi "spies." (The RPF is a political and military movement formed in 1987 by the Tutsi refugee diaspora in Uganda. Tutsi refugees fled to Uganda to escape ethnic purges beginning in 1959. In 1994, the RPF invaded Rwanda and halted the genocide. The RPF is the current ruling political party of Rwanda, led by President Paul Kagame.)

² *Interahamwe*: Kinyarwanda for "those who attack together." Refers to a Hutu militia group composed of mainly Hutu youth that was active during the genocide.

man begged them to forgive me and gave them a lot of money for me. They released me and he took me to a house where no one lived.

When we arrived there, he told me that he was going to rape me until the day when he would have enough of me. He raped me everyday and I was always feeling ill, bleeding in my private parts and having nausea. He gave the keys of that house to some other *Interahamwe* and they came to rape me any time they wanted. I did not know if it was always the same men who raped me. I only knew that I did not have time to rest or to cry.

When that man knew that the *Inkotanyi* were getting closer, he forced me to flee to Congo together. On the way there, I managed to stay behind and was able to remain in Rwanda.

After the genocide, I lived in very bad conditions as all my family had been killed. Only one cousin with whom I live now survived. I realized that I was pregnant of one of those *Interahamwe* and decided to find a husband. I married a soldier and told him that the baby was his because I did not want to tell him about my past. The baby died when I was being operated to give birth to the child, and I have been operated seven times since. I have lost one kidney because I have been beaten hardly during the genocide and I only have the left one.

My husband died in 2001. When I made a HIV³ test, the results were positive. We had one child who is HIV negative. I have not started taking the ARV medication⁴ but I receive treatments at an organization that supports survivors of the genocide. I thank the organization for its help and support, comfort and joy.

³ HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system and can lead to AIDS. Someone who is diagnosed as being infected with HIV is said to be HIV-positive.

⁴ ARV treatment: Antiretroviral treatment. Treatment for people living with HIV that works by inhibiting the ability of HIV to reproduce in the body.

I had good relations with my cousin before he got married; we share his house and I did not think that I was a burden for him. When he got married, however, his wife was not happy at all with the situation. I wish I could have a house of my own.

I am still young, yet I am not able to work. Only God knows my future and has my tomorrow.

I have already forgiven those who raped me. I feel much better, it was like a heavy burden weighing on my heart but now I feel free.

Gacaca courts⁵ are no help for me. Instead, they bring me back to the nightmares of 1994. I have not yet received justice and compensation for what I have lost. If I could find a sponsor for my child, it would be much better.

The world must know what happened in Rwanda. We have wounds deep in our hearts and when someone denies what happened in our country, the wounds get deeper and deeper. I hope that my testimony will fill some hearts with compassion and I will get help through it.

Even though we have a dark past, we have a better tomorrow and we can do something to develop our society.

⁵ *Gacaca*: Kinyarwanda for “on the grass,” referring to the traditional courts of Rwanda. Their mandate evolved after 1994 to adjudicate crimes committed during the genocide.